

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 042883 TOSEC 040202

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FOR SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

EO. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SS, MO, AG

SUBJECT: ATHERTON VISIT TO NORTH AFRICA

REF: RABAT 0983

1. YOU WILL HAVE SEEN NEUMANN'S RECOMMENDATION (RABAT REF-TEL) THAT MY VISIT BE PUT ON ICE. FOLLOWING ARE MY THOUGHTS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION IN DECIDING HOW TO REPLY TO NEUMANN:

A. BASIC PURPOSE OF TRIP IS TO BE RESPONSIVE TO BOUMEDIENE'S APPROACH THROUGH RASHID ZEGAR AND TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO DIS-ABUSE BOUMEDIENE OF MISCONCEPTIONS RE U.S. POLICY, TYING INTO ROBINSON'S VISIT AS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WHOLE RANGE OF U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS IN BROADEST AND MOST CONSTRUCTIVE POSSIBLE CONTEXT. IT WOULD WORK AGAINST THIS PURPOSE TO NOTIFY ALGERIANS, WHO BY NOW KNOW OF PROPOSAL FOR MY VISIT, THAT WE WERE POSTPONING IT.

B. TIMING OF ZEGAR APPROACH MAKES IT EXTREMELY UNLIKELY
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THAT, AS NEUMANN SPECULATES, IT IS COUNTERPLOY TO OSMAN

STOP IN MOSCOW ON ROUTE BACK FROM FAR EAST. IN ANY EVENT, I DO NOT SEE WHY THIS DEVELOPMENT IN SOVIET-MOROCCAN RELATIONS SHOULD INHIBIT US FROM TAKING STEP (I.E., MY VISIT)

IN U.S.-MOROCCAN RELATIONS. IF ANYTHING, IT WOULD SEEM TO ME TO REINFORCE DESIRABILITY OF OUR BEING SEEN TO BE IN TOUCH WITH BOTH MOROCCO AND ALGERIA.

C. NEUMANN HAS VALID POINT IN ARGUING THAT MY VISIT SHOULD NOT APPEAR TO BE CUTTING ACROSS EFFORTS OF ARAB LEAGUE SYG RIAD. IF IT WERE NOT FOR ALGERIAN CONSIDERATION IN PARA A ABOVE, THIS WOULD PERHAPS ARGUE FOR POSTPONEMENT. ON OTHER HAND, IF RIAD DOES IN FACT HAVE ANY CHANCE OF RECONCILING ALGERIAN AND MOROCCAN POSITIONS, AND ASSUMING THAT THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE LARGELY ON HASSAN'S TERMS, IT COULD REINFORCE RIAD'S EFFORTS FOR US TO GET ACROSS TO BOUMEDIENE AT THIS TIME THAT HE SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT HARBOR HOPE U.S. CAN BRING ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN MOROCCAN POSITION.

D. FACT OF RIAD MISSION MAKES IT PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT THAT WE EXPLAIN PURPOSE OF MY VISIT TO EGYPTIANS AND THAT PRESS HANDLING BE LOW-KEY AND EMPHASIZE THAT WE ARE NOT REPEAT NOT UNDERTAKING MEDIATION EFFORT.

E. I SHOULD THINK WE COULD PUT QUESTION OF MY VISITING RABAT TO MOROCCANS AND LET THEM DECIDE. NEUMANN COULD TELL THEM I WAS GOING TO ALGERIA WITH ROBINSON FOR DISCUSSIONS OF OVERALL U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS AND THAT WE EXPECT BOUMEDIENE WILL WANT TO DISCUSS SAHARA. HE COULD OFFER VISIT TO MOROCCANS IF THEY WISHED EITHER ON ROUTE TO ALGERIA, WITH AUDIENCE WITH KING FEBRUARY 26, OR AFTER ALGERIAN VISIT -- I.E., ABOUT MARCH 2-3.

F. THERE IS ALSO THE OPTION OF CHECKING VISIT OUT FIRST WITH EGYPTIANS, BEFORE GOING TO MOROCCANS, IN LIGHT OF RIAD MISSION. PROBLEM WITH THIS IS THAT, GIVEN ALGERIAN CONSIDERATION IN PARA A ABOVE, WE WOULD BE IN DIFFICULT POSITION VIS-A-VIS BOUMEDIENE IF EGYPTIANS SUGGESTED DELAY. IF WE CHOSE THIS OPTION, AND EGYPTIANS SUGGESTED A DELAY IN MY SECRET

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VISIT, WE WOULD OF COURSE SEEK TO PUT BEST FACE ON IT WITH BOUMEDIENE, EXPLAINING THAT WITH RIAD EFFORTS IN TRAIN, WE THOUGHT IT BETTER NOT TO COMPLICATE MATTERS BY ASKING HIM TO RECEIVE ME AT THIS TIME BUT THAT I WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO COME LATER AT HIS CONVENIENCE. EAGLEBURGER

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